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ABSTRACT

A synthesis of 17 studies concerning Oklahoma legislation for the beginning teacher induction year program covers: (1) the concerns and perceptions of entry year teachers; (2) roles and functions of teacher consultants, local district administrators, and higher education representatives; and (3) the frequency and nature of the processes and activities of the induction committee and its members and the attitudes of the participating parties. Overall satisfaction has been reported by persons involved in the Entry Year Assistance Program. Teacher consultants were perceived by entry level teachers as providing the most guidance in terms of human relations, classroom management, teaching and assessment, and professionalism. Teacher consultants, however, frequently indicated that they were constrained by being unable to find time to meet with entry level teachers. Some problems were perceived in such areas as work socialization and translation of knowledge to practice. While the studies revealed a lack of role function guidelines for committee members, moderate agreement on the needs of the entry level teacher was noted. (CB)

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A SYNTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH OF OKLAHOMA'S INDUCTION YEAR PROGRAM AS A BASIS FOR POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

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A Synthesis of the Research of Oklahoma's Induction Year Program as a Basis for Policy Considerations

Background

Seventeen studies relevant to the 1982 legislated induction year program for beginning teachers in Oklahoma have been conducted. The legislated induction year program identified the beginning teacher as an Entry Year Teacher (EYT) to be assisted and evaluated by a three person Entry Year Assistance Committee (EYAC). The EYAC included a classroom teacher designated as a Teacher Consultant (TC), a local district administrator (LDA) and a higher education representative (HER). The legislation and the regulations of the state department specified that EYAC must meet with the EYT a minimum of three times, that the observation form developed by the state department must be completed at least twice by each committee member, that the TC will observe, assist, and advise the EYT 72 clock hours during the year and receive a stipend of $500 for those services, and that the EYAC will make a recommendation for, against or delay standard certification of the EYT. The legislation and regulations did not specify roles and functions for the four parties involved in the induction year program.

The seventeen studies have been on such topics as: 1) the concerns and perceptions of the Entry Year Teacher (EYT); 2) the role and functions of the Teacher Consultant (TC), the Local District Administrator (LDA) and the Higher Education Representative (HER); and 3) the frequencies and nature of the processes and activities of the committee and its members and the attitudes of the participating parties. Typical of the 12 problem statements included

within the 17 studies were such statements as: What are the perceptions of the entry year teacher and the members of the entry year assistance committee regarding the involvement of the EYAC members?, Has the role of the teacher consultant changed from the early years?, What topics and processes characterized the content of the interactions among TC's and EYT's?, and What professional benefits do the teacher consultants receive from serving in their role? Typical of the hypotheses for the five studies dealing with significance of difference were: Perceptions of EYAC members and EYT's regarding assistance of the committee members in the four categories of the required observation instrument; the relative importance of the four categories of the observation instrument; and the perceptions of EYT's and their Principals of the assistance provided by the Principal.

Findings

In General

Persons involved with the Entry Year Assistance Program (EYAP) and included in research studies reported overall satisfaction with the program. Barbee and Finley (1985) concluded that participants had a positive feeling. Teacher consultants believed they were successful in fulfilling their roles of offering assistance (Godley, Wilson and Klug, 1985). More than 85% of the respondents (King, 1984) indicated that the EYAC was an effective way to provide guidance and assistance to the EYT, that the EYAP provided opportunity for meaningful communication among EYAC members, and that the EYT was regularly informed of strengths and weaknesses. Stern (1985) and Stern and Wisley (1985) concluded that EYT's and elementary principals were satisfied with the EYAP.

Role of the Teacher Consultant

Teacher Consultants (TC) and EYT's were asked what roles TC's performed. Combs, Koetting, and Friske (1986) and Godley, Wilson, and Klug (1985) studied TC's only while Combs (1985), Hamilton and St. Clair (1986), Stern (1985), and Stern and Wisley (1985) obtained data from EYT's only. Shepherd and Gallaher (1986) studied TC's and EYT's.

Combs (1985), in a study of elementary teachers, found that TC's provided assistance at different levels in the area of reading. The TC impacted decisions prior to reading instruction relating to placement of children, instructional materials, organization of reading groups, pacing of groups, and techniques. Very little impact influenced decisions made in the midst of instructional activities. Supporting this finding were Shepherd and Gallaher (1986) who differentiated between instruction-related and instruction-centered content categories. Examples of instruction-related topic categories were professional growth and organizations, orientation to building and school district, grade referrals, recordkeeping, materials/resources, and discipline. Instruction-centered topics were goal setting/lesson planning, curriculum, classroom management, teaching methods, and special instructional concerns. They found that EYT's and TC's recorded in logs similar frequencies of intervals on all content topic categories. Also, desired frequencies were requested by EYT's and TC's. Entry Year Teachers wanted a decrease in the frequency of interactions on these instruction related content topics: materials/resources, discipline, and orientation to building unit. They desired an increase in the frequency interaction on the instruction-centered topics of curriculum, goal of setting/lesson planning, and special instructional concerns.

Hamilton and St. Clair (1986) found these content topics to be discussed and desired most frequently: relations with students, student discipline, classroom management, job description and expectations, relations with administration, curriculum and course content, planning, organization, and class preparation. Least frequently discussed and desired were assigning homework, facilities, programs, district policies, and legal responsibilities. On all 30 consultation topics discussed there was a significant difference between actual and desired frequencies. A comparison of the findings of Hamilton and St. Clair with those of Shepherd and Gallaher revealed an agreement on the decreasing amount of emphases that the TC's and EYT's wished to place on what Shepherd and Gallaher referred to as instructional related topics, with exception of the topic of discipline. Both studies also reported a desired increase of frequency of interaction on the part of TC's and EYT's with those topics identified as instructional centered, i.e. classroom management, curriculum, lesson planning.

Hamilton and St. Clair (1986) and Shepherd and Gallaher (1986) also studied the inclusion of selected clinincal supervision behaviors within the EYAP. Both studies found a significant difference between the actual and the desired frequency of utilization of these clinical supervision behaviors on the part of the TC as perceived by the EYT's. Teacher Consultant's and EYT's agreed on the actual frequency of occurrence of the process methods of listening, evaluating, modeling, observing, and consulting while disagreeing on the frequency of the method of advising. EYT's perceived the method of advising occurring much more frequently than did the TC's. EYT's and TC's wanted the methods of observing, consulting and modeling increased in frequence of occurrence.

Teacher consultants wanted to increase the frequency of intervals of interactions on the instruction-related topics of professional growth, relationship, and grade referrals and on the instruction-centered topics of curriculum, goal setting/lesson planning, teaching methods, and special instructional concerns. They wanted to decrease grading/reporting and orientation to building unit. Hamilton and St. Clair (1986) concluded that EYT's indicated a desire for greater participation of the TC in supervisory behaviors. Some topics discussed could be decreased in emphasis while others increased. Shepherd and Gallaher (1986) suggested that EYT's showed a strong sense of priority in the frequency of interactions with content and with process methods categories. Interactions with instruction-centered content topics weighed more heavily than with instruction-related content topics. Entry Year Teachers seemed to be desiring more of a peer-consultant role from the TC than an advising role. A trend away from an emphasis on formal/planned observations and modes of communication toward a less formal approach was found by Combs, Koetting, and Friske (1986).

Consulting teachers were asked in a structured interview how they viewed their role (Godley, Wilson, and Klug, 1985). They believed they could offer interpersonal skills (patience, gentleness, and friendliness), collegial skills (reality oriented and taking the initiative), and process skills (providing support, being honest, and providing criticism).

Stern (1985) analyzed the perceptions of EYT's regarding the support and assistance of TC's relative to the administrator and higher education representative in the four areas of human relations, classroom management, teaching and assessment, and professionalism. Although there were no significant differences, TC's were rated the highest in all 4 areas.

Teacher consultants provided more assistance, as reported both by EYT's and their principals, than did the principal or the higher education representative (Stern and Wisley, 1985); however, the least amount of assistance by both TC's and principals was provided in the areas of classroom management and professionalism.

Additional studies analyzed the role of the teacher consultant and Crawford, McBee, and Watson (1985) found that TC's felt constrained by being unable to find time to meet with EYT's, by the lack of administrative support, by difficulty in scheduling observations, and by difficulty in knowing appropriate amount of advice to give. Walker and Kleine (1986) found that, in their case study, the TC seemed to have difficulty in defining her role and determining what assistance the EYT needed and desired.

Role of the Local District Administrator

The role of the local district administrator (LDA) the EYAP was described as involving logistical planning (King 1984), as lack of support (Crawford, McBee, and Watson, 1985), as stating the greatest area of concern regarding EYT was professionalism (Meritt 1983), as indicating the necessity of demonstration by the EYT of appropriate behavior and composure (Perry, 1985), as reporting more observations of and conferences with the EYT than reported by the EYT's (Stern and Wisley, 1985), and as being unaware of the EYT's abilities (Walker and Kleine (1986). The studies of role and function revealed a perceived discrepency in the role.

Role of the Higher Education Representative

Providing general support and assistance was the main role stated by the respresentatives from higher education who served on the EYAC's. They helped EYT's with lesson development, methods, and classroom management problems

(Friske, Combs, and Koetting, 1986). The HER gave the area of human relations the highest priority both in the 4 categories of the observation and of the EYAC members (Meritt, 1983). EYT's in a study by Stern and Wisley (1985) reported the most assistance given by HER to be in the area of teaching and assessment.

Problems Encountered

Godley, Klug, and Wilson (1985) asked HER's to describe problems encountered by EYT's. Reported were work socialization (assumption of the role of teacher, relationships, and balancing school and personal life), personal characteristic (self-concept, support, and personal concerns), and translating knowledge and practice (materials/resources, discipline, presentation of material, and management/organizational skills).

Entry Year Teachers were most dissatisfied with the usefulness and effectiveness of the EYAC meetings (Martin, 1986). Walker and Kleine (1986) reported a problem with a lack by the EYAC of recommendations for improvement.

Teacher consultants seemed to define success for a first year teacher in terms of membership in the institution rather than performance behaviors in the classroom (Shepherd and Gallaher, 1986). Barbee and Finley (1985) reported that TC's received no orientation for their responsibilities.

Areas for Policy Considerations

An analysis of the induction process in Oklahoma provides an opportunity for suggesting some policy considerations. Oklahoma was one of the first states to adopt an extensive induction-year program and now has a four year history available for study. What are some areas particularly worthy of consideration?

Persons involved in the EYAP indicate overall satisfaction with the several facets involved. General agreement exists in the necessity of the program and in the benefits derived therefrom. Dissatisfaction surrounds the role of the teacher consultant, determining the exact needs of EYT's, and the commitment by some of the building principals.

Entry Year Teachers and TC's both indicated that teacher consultants rarely received any in-service preparation for their role. They prefered a supervisory role rather than an evaluative role, yet, because of the design of the induction program which includes a decision near the end of the year regarding eligibility for certification, they were also in an evaluative role. Additionally, TC's were rarely given additional planning time to perform their role. They were expected to assume this responsibility in addition to their regular assignment. Entry Year Teachers indicated a desire for the TC to use more clinical supervisory behaviors and requested more assistance before the school term begins and during the first semester rather than in the second semester.

Teacher consultants expressed frustration about the difficulty in finding the time to observe the EYT and to meet to discuss mutual concerns and progress.

In many instances school principals reported that they were prepared inadequate for their role in the EYAP and were perceived EYT's as lacking the commitment necessary to provide the support needed. The process was viewed by principals as an intrusion on their time. To some extent, in Oklahoma, principals resented the fact that TC's were paid a stipend of $500 to perform their duties.

Conclusion

The Entry Year Assistance Program has been operating in Oklahoma for four

years and was perceived as successful by those included in one or more of the 17 studies. The studies did reveal a lack of role function guidelines for the members of the entry year assistance committee and the lack of clinical supervision skills on the part of the teacher consultants. The studies also reported a moderate agreement on the needs of the entry year teacher. An examination of the studies also revealed a lack of standard techniques, instruments and design patterns for the study of induction year programs thereby restricting the comparison and even reporting of results from the various studies.

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